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Workman, Esther, "Problems in Developing Water Colors" (1958). *Master's Theses*. 622.
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PROBLEMS IN DEVELOPING WATER COLORS

ABSTRACT

Submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for M. S. Degree
in Art Education
at
Fort Hays Kansas State College
Hays, Kansas

by
Esther Workman
July 1958

PROBLEMS IN DEVELOPING WATER COLORS

I find that working with water colors can be a very satisfying experience. It can give me a strong feeling of elation when I am able to put down in color, space, line, and texture an impression of an idea, feeling, or mood that I want to express. Sometimes I like to try depicting some of the forces at work in busy America. But most of all I like to give my impressions of nature. If I achieve my purpose, I have a harmonized arrangement of all the parts into a well-planned whole picture which says something to the mind or spirit, or both.

Then again I can become very much exasperated when the color doesn't come out right or the pattern simply won't hold together! It is on days when everything seems to go wrong that I am completely exhausted and I think I will give up trying to express myself in such a tricky medium as water color. Then I put my brushes away for a few days until suddenly something urges me to paint again. I can hardly wait. If everything goes right this time, I work feverishly for hours without stopping. It is only when I stop that I realize I am worn out. But I am, oh, so satisfied because I have been able, through the use of symbols of my own invention, to attempt the achievement of a truly personal, creative, unified expression. It is this I am striving for. I know that I can't paint as anyone else does. I must be honest with myself.

For this paper I am using examples of the pictures I have painted. With these I shall attempt to point out some of the problems I meet in developing water colors. I have taken photographs of these pictures.

The colored photographs are fairly accurate in color value. I included the black and white ones to give a better idea of my light and dark patterns.

All of the paintings included in my thesis fall somewhere between the realistic and the non-objective. I would much rather abstract a painting to a certain extent than have it too realistic because my feelings and moods are being expressed to a greater extent when I abstract. The way a certain scene in nature impresses me is of so much importance that one of my problems is now to introduce such feelings into my style of painting so that some of it is felt when another person looks at the picture.

This problem was met in painting the picture of the Santa Barbara Mission in California. I tried to depict a feeling of vitality and ageless beauty that the old mission and grounds had for me. Fresh vibrant colors put on with most of the lines extending skyward helped.

I find painting mountains a very satisfying experience. Some, such as the Sandias in New Mexico must be depicted as huge, colorful, and almost devoid of vegetation. They need bold brush strokes of much yellow, yellow ochre, and sienna. These brush strokes need to be done with a large flat brush. I like to use red sable.

Sometimes I find that it is a good idea to compare my paintings with photographs of the same scenes to see if I am portraying designed realism and not just copying nature. I have done this in two paintings included in my thesis. Scenes in nature call for many different types of expression. At times a place will seem so very calm and

peaceful. This calls for quiet colors low in intensity, and most of the lines or planes parallel to the horizon. In other locations much activity is taking place. Lines and color shapes swirl and dance around. Movement is expressed in many ways. I find it best to dramatize through the use of light colors next to dark ones, and much movement in the lines which help to make up various forms.

Sometimes it is much easier for me to show my impressions of various happenings by starting out painting with no idea or mood in mind. I simply wet my paper and begin to apply rather large patches of light colors quickly and with a large brush. Usually something in these color shapes will soon give me an idea from which to work, and I will carry on from there. These paintings call for quick action. I must be able to visualize what I want to do with little hesitation if I have a unified, fresh looking picture when I finish. I find that these paintings are usually more abstract and also more personal.

The last two pictures that I included in my creative work are non-objective. No objects can be named. Here my problem was one of arranging color shapes to form a pleasing design.

In summary, I find my main problem in water color painting is how to put an idea down quickly just as I want it and keep it fresh and watery looking. I want to be able to spill out an idea in color that will in the end be right in design. Fredrick Whitaker, an American water colorist, once said that he wanted his paintings to look as if he had painted them in a few minutes even though they had actually taken a week or two. He doesn't want that worked-over look. To be

able to get this freshness, I must learn to visualize quickly what I want to portray, then know just how much detail I need in order to say what I really want to say. I need to learn how much color is necessary because colors dry lighter. I believe that a vivid imagination is very helpful to the water colorist. Painting with water colors is not only my most relaxing pastime, but also the most satisfying means I have for communicating my ideas and feelings.



A photograph of
Santa Barbara Mission

"Santa Barbara Mission"





"Sandia Mountains Scene"



This photograph was taken on a hill,
while the painting was done down
at the river's edge.



"Quietude "



"Missouri Countryside"

"Still Life With Bread #1"



"Still Life With Bread #2"

"Burning Forest"





"Summer Landscape"



"Creation"



"Non-Objective #1"



"Non-Objective #2"





"Modern Cliff Dwellings"



"Farmland"



"Home on the Hill"



"Doorways"